

The CLAN CALL

By Hapsburg Liebe

Illustrations by Irwin Myers

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CHAPTER V.

At the River Again.
John Moreland met Dale at the gate. "What did ye find out?"

"I learned," was the answer, "that the Littlefields all lost their guns just as the Morelands did."

"The devil!"

The mountaineers began to crowd about Dale.

"Any who," asked their leader, "ye think done it?"

Hill Dale shook his head slowly and threw out his hands.

"How should I know?" he went on. "Dale told me about the Littlefield guns disappearing. I saw her down at the river, she was fishing."

"Did she say anything?" pursued John Moreland. "It sounded like she knew what these guns went to?"

"She told me," said Dale, "she would give her life to stop the fighting. She seemed rather badly worked up over it."

From the cabin's front doorway came a woman's sorrowful voice:

"And me, too, I'd give my life to stop this here fightin'. I had a boy, a big strapping boy—"

John Moreland turned toward his wife and interrupted. "Now, Addie, honey, don't do that."

He ended the talk.

Mrs. Moreland dried her eyes on a corner of her freshly ironed gingham apron and announced the monthly meal. The mountaineers dispersed. Grandpa Moreland went west clucking at his long white beard and grumbling over the loss of his beloved old ancestor.

An hour later Dale entered the Moreland trailer on the vine-laden front porch and suggested that they look over the coal property that afternoon. He was eager to go to work, eager to be doing something worth while, he told Moreland. The hitman stood very still for what seemed to the other a very long time, and had no word to say, evidently the four had all his mind now.

When he did speak, he said simply: "All right, Hill."

After half an hour of fighting their way through thickets of mesquing brush and tree, they drew up before an old and unshaded cabin at the north end of David Moreland's mountain. Moreland left the wagon and pointed to a spot under a small, gnarled willow.

"That," said he, "is where we found my brother David."

The two men turned for the point at which the road went out to the right of day.

Dale picked up a piece of the splintering black stuff. Judging by the little he knew and the great amount of despatch he had heard, the vein was very large and the coal itself of the best grade.

"It was a big find," he told his companion, "a big find! It was a pity to let it lie here untouched for so long; and yet it's worth more today than it was ever worth before."

His enthusiasm ran warm, and Moreland caught it quickly. Together they hauled planks out the little railroad that was to wind its way through the ridge and connect with the big rail road at the Hollister switch.

"I know I'm a-doin' right about it," the mountaineer said twice for the benefit of his conscience. "I know poor Davis he wouldn't want me to do this if he could know."

"I'm sure of it," agreed Dale. "I'll start for Cincinnati tomorrow. I've got enough money to take me there and back. I have a very wealthy friend there—his name is Harris, I think—I can borrow enough from him to finance the beginning of this thing. And I'll buy a locomotive and car, and all the other necessary machinery, while I'm in Cincinnati—unless I fail to get the money from Harris. When I get back, which should be within eight days, we'll start the work. At a guess, I say we'll need twenty men. Can we get them?"

"Short," nodded the mountaineer. "And all Morelands at that."

They turned homeward. At last Hill Dale was happy. He had something to do now—an aim in life. He had difficulties to overcome, obstacles to remove, barriers to surmount—it was his big chance!

It was almost sundown when Dale returned from his visit to the coal vein—Big Pine mountain hid the sun at a little after three in the afternoon. He borrowed a fishing rod and a minnow patch, which made his going to the river seem proper enough to John Moreland, and set out to meet Babe Littlefield. He was glad that nobody expressed a desire to accompany him.

He found Babe Littlefield's daughter where he had found her twice before—sitting on a stone the size of a small barrel. She was Baking with an unhailed hook, which was equal to nibbling not at all, and she seemed pleased when she saw him coming. He sat down on the stone at her side. She moved over a little shyly, and tried to

cover her feet with her calico skirt. "Needn't bother to hide them," laughed Hill Dale. "They're pretty enough. Most feel, you know, are necessary evils, like chimneys and rain-spoons."

Babe Littlefield blushed. He went on, to hide her confusion. "Tell me about the rifles."

"You must shore keep it a secret," she told him.

"I promise."

"Better put your hook in, so's of any body comes along—"

Dale threw out an empty hook.

"I want to tell ye some other things that, so's ye'll understand better when I come to the part about the rifles," Dale began, looking thoughtfully across the water to where a kingfisher sat in watchful waiting. She continued slowly, choosing her words carefully. "I was brought up to hate them Morelands, but—I don't think I do. My people is just like the Morelands. The biggest difference ye can find is that one side mostly has grey eyes like you and either side mostly has brown eyes like me. All but their everlasting fighting, they're good people, Hill Dale."

"Each side, ye see, is brought up to hate other side. I'm ashamed to tell ye—but—I understand the first plain words my Uncle Sam and Littlefield's last father said was these here: '—o John Moreland.' It started a long time ago, and it started over nothing. Grandpa Littlefield and John Moreland's dad got in a dispute over whether Calvary was in Virginia or Nawth Carolina, and went to fightin' about it. Pretty soon my Uncle Sam and Abner Moreland happened along, and they went to fightin' too. Thank goodness, now on Sunday and some of 'em don't have their rifles with 'em. What's else we are or aint up here, Hill Dale, we generally respects the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

"Addie, honey," said he, "I'm mighty sorry."

"Ef—ef you was much sorry, John," Mrs. Moreland half sobbed, "ye wouldn't go down there to the river."

"Me a coward?" Moreland appeared to grow sick in stature. "Me let a Littlefield sent me news like this here which Cal brings, and not do nothing at all about it? I thought you knowned me better'n that, Addie."

He faced his two visitors again. Always he was the general, the leader of his clan. He sent Dale in one direction and Luke in another, to arouse his kinmen.

Then he beckoned to Dale, who had been trying hard and vainly to think of something to do or say that would be of aid to the cause of the women.

"I don't want you in this here mix-up," he said desolately. "You must stay clean out of it. You ain't used to this way o' fightin'. Addies, you're our hope. Moren, that, mornin', you may'nt live life in Babe Littlefield, you can't get around that, Hill Dale."

He went on after a moment. "Ef I git my right put out today, I want ye to do the best ye can with the coal. But, o' course ye will. I want ye to do me two favors, Hill Dale, so I have my right put out today. Will ye do 'em for me, my friend?"

"Certainly," Dale promised.

"Much obliged to ye, so. The first is this: I want ye to take good pay out o' what the coal brings pay for your work. The second is this: I want ye to go to New Littlefield after I'm done—perhise he is yet alive—and tell him about the end o' my testiment prayer. I want him to know I went him one better, at a loss a bigger sum inside 'an him. Remember, Hill, you've done promised me how you go ahead to Cincinnati, and do just like ye didn't know the lesson thing about this trouble we're gonna to have. So long as ye, an' good luck!"

"I don't like the idea," Dale began when the big hillman interrupted sharply:

"You can't. You can't do no good here!"

Heck started. Dale turned and fled toward the rocky mountain, those mounted to be nothing else to do.

"What're you hollerin' about, Hill?"

Dale stopped his feet. He saw that the man coming after him called him. "Come over here."

"I was thinking," he said, "of the difference between you and some other women I know."

Her clear brown eyes widened.

"And I reckon I seen pretty no' count, don't I?"

"No not at all. It is—er, quite the opposite, Babe. You make them appear unreal, artificial."

Babe Littlefield's countenance brightened. She did not doubt that he meant it. He was not of the sort that faltered. She began to like Bill Dale at that same instant.

And Bill Dale told himself as he went homeward that he was beginning to like Babe Littlefield. He did not feel the feeling, because it somehow made the world seem a better place.

Early the following morning Dale made ready for his journey to Cincinnati. Having learned the evening before that he was going, his Heck had come to accompany him to the Halfway switch.

The two set out. They had three hours in which to cross David Moreland's mountain before the arrival of Dale's train, and they walked leisurely.

They had not gone a dozen rods when there came from somewhere down near the river the sound of a rifle shot. Both stopped and faced about quickly.

"They ain't found their weapons!" exclaimed Heck. "They have, I god, as sure as I'm right!"

"How do you know?" Dale's voice was troubled.

"I shore know," and Heck narrowed his gaze. "At was Babe Littlefield's old 45 Winch. I'd know that gun if I heard it at the mouth pole. The bar'l it's been cut off, and it don't sound like other Winchesters."

(Continued next week)

"Caleb Moreland was down near the river cleaning out the springhouse ditch," Dale muttered, facing his companion. "I think we'd better go back." Together they went back to the cabin. John Moreland and his wife and their son Luke were standing at the weatherboard front gate, with their eyes turned anxiously toward the river. Caleb was coming up through the meadow, and he carried his hat in his hand.

"Who tired that shot?" asked Dale.

"Ben Littlefield," John Moreland answered readily.

Dale threw out an empty hook.

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As the figures reached dangerous ground they dropped to their hands and knees and began to crawl through the tall grass, the brushwood and the meadow closer. They were intent upon reaching the shelter of the trees that lined the banks of the river without being seen. The stream here was more than fifty yards wide; this was Blue Cat stream. Two huge trees stood back a rod or so from the water, making the final shooting distance some seventy yards.

Delayed Heck! "Let's set down here and catch it, here!"

Dale was silent. The very air was filled with the spirit of tragedy. The far-off throb of a cowboy seemed tragic; tragic, too, sounded the song of a bird somewhere in the tree branches overhead.

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(Continued next week)

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Southern Baptists Wage Vigorous Warfare Against Tuberculosis In This Section



57,782. The death rate from tuberculosis is 14.3% higher in the South than in the Nation as a whole. One reason for the exceedingly high death rate in the South is the great prevalence of the plague among the negroes who are especially susceptible to tuberculosis, the death rate among them being three and one-half times that among the whites. Not inasmuch as the negroes will doubtless continue to be intimately associated with the whites in domestic and other work in the future, the whites will never be safe from infection until the negroes, as well as the whites, have been freed from the plague.

Included in this plant at present are the administration building, the newly completed women's infirmary and men's infirmary, a boathouse and swimming plant and the superintendent's quarters. Provided for in the building plans for the future are a medical and educational building, nurses' home, children's building, dormitories for convalescent patients, an occupational and vocational therapy building, chapel, laundry and minor structures.

150 People Die Daily.